Death of the Subject, Birth of Dialogue: Bakhtin and his French Reception

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In an influential article entitled "Une poétique ruinée" [1970], an introduction to the French edition of Mikhail Bakhtin *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Julia Kristeva affirms that "[l]e travail de Bakhtine nous met … au bord d'une théorie de la signification, qui aurait besoin d'une théorie du sujet" (21).[1] Kristeva's assumption that the Russian thinker failed to develope a theory of subjectivity leads her to posit a "divided subject" (13) (*une division du sujet*) as well as a "fragmented self" (13) (*un morcellement du je*) at the heart of Bakhtin's epistemological foundations. This move, while an example of the generative power inherent in the dialogic encounter of two theoretical perspectives betrays Kristeva's own theoretical inclinations and alters Bakhtin's. In this paper, I intend to nuance Kristeva's emphasis on fragmentation and division of subjectivity by focusing on Bakhtin's "dialogic principle" and its relation to conceptual binaries. By considering the Russian thinker holistically, I will trace a continuity between his multi-layered thought which spans from a theory of consciousness to a theory of the novel, and argue that the latter is firmly rooted in the former.[2] The notion of dialogue will then serve as an Ariadne's thread to trace a path through a polymorphous but nonetheless organic thought. Such a genealogical approach will allow me to set in motion a dialogical relationship within Bakhtin's writing as well as to engage in a critical dialogue with his astute French interpreter.

While lamenting the lack of a theory of the subject in Bakhtin, Kristeva nonetheless establishes a continuity between subjectivity and his theory of the novel. "[*L*]*e roman polyphonique*," she affirms, "est bien situé sur cette brèche du 'moi' " ("Une poétique" 15). The source of the notion of a fractured self (*brèche du moi*) which "disrupts the speaking subject" (14) (*pulvérise le sujet parlant*) does not belong to Bakhtin who supposedly "would need" such a theory, but to Kristeva, or rather, to the chronotope to which she belonged. As a member of the *Tel Quel* group Kristeva was in fact participating in the development of a post-structuralist theoretical rethinking of subjectivity. Other distinguished members of the group were Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida (to quote just the most prominent names). These thinkers were all proclaiming their own version of Nietzsche's "death of God." Hence the postmodern slogans, "death of the author," "death of man," "death of the 'signified.' " In this light, Kristeva's notion of a fragmentation of the self can be read as her attempt to appropriate Bakhtin in a similar way that her colleagues did with Nietzsche.[3] Moreover, Kristeva's emphasis on a "*spaltung*" (13) of the subject, which she reiterates throughout the article with different translations (*brèche*,

division, scission etc.) points to another theoretical influence: Lacan's (post)-structuralist rereading of psychoanalysis. In fact, in a Lacanian undertone, Kristeva holds that Bakhtin's theory is full of "intuitions qui pressentent l'intervention freudienne, avec la place qu'elle accordera au *désir*de l'*autre*" (9). The subject which sustains Bakhtin's "*roman polyphonique,*" according to Kristeva, is therefore a postmodern split and fragmented subject (i.e. a dead subject).

Kristeva's understanding of Bakhtin's theory of the novel is influenced by her own theoretical considerations on subjectivity. More specifically, she displaces the fracture of the self (*la brèche du moi*) into Bakhtin's literary theory. "Bakhtin," writes Kristeva, "fait intervenir une *typologie* des univers littéraires, irréductibles les uns aux autres" (11). A dichotomic vision of the subject leads to a dichotomized understanding of the Russian thinker's enterprise. Supporting her emphasis on discontinuity is the fact that Bakhtin posits a series of dichotomic concepts upon which he bases his theory of the novel. The oppositions epic/novel, monoglossia/polyglossia, centripetal/centrifugal seem to endorse Kristeva's claim of the incommensurable character of these concepts. However, the logical conclusion of such a theoretical stand would lead to the paradoxical affirmation that the originator of a theory based on dialogue, is ultimately a dualistic thinker who developed a static typology of literature.

Now, of course Kristeva is too attentive a reader to fall into this simplistic interpretation of Bakhtin. In fact, in "Le mot, le dialogue et le roman," she speaks of "*opposition non exclusive*" (152) at work in Bakhtin's thought. It should therefore be clear that my intent is not to challenge Kristeva's general understanding of Bakhtin, but rather to engage those passages in her article where her language use allows for a generative dialogue to take place. My polemic approach ultimately rests on a hermeneutic concern. Kristeva, in fact, provides me with what Bakhtin calls that "counter-discourse to the discourse of the utterer" (qtd. in Todorov 22) which for the Russian thinker is a necessary condition for understanding. In fact, he affirms that "*all understanding is dialogical*" (22). Moreover, it should be noted, that my dialogical engagement with Kristeva is limited to the article under consideration, where her terminology indicates an emphasis on fragmentation and division. I have no pretensions of addressing the totality of her work. Finally, in order to do justice to Kristeva's reading of Bakhtin, I must hasten to add that in "Le mot" she does not reiterate such an emphasis.

In order to come to a dynamic (as opposed to taxonomic) understanding of Bakhtin's theory of the novel it is necessary to investigate his reconceptualization of binaries via the key concept of dialogue. In other words, it is necessary to (re)consider the epistemic foundations of Bakhtin's thought. Given the central place that dialogism[4] occupies in Bakhtin's writing, it is tempting to consider it as the "royal road" to the Russian theorist's work. However, this syntagm, coined by the father of psychoanalysis, conjures a monolithic image which contrasts with the essence of dialogism and with Bakhtin's heterogeneous and pluralistic approach. The place of dialogue in the Bakhtinian universe is better illustrated by the image of a "crossroad." In fact, dialogism functions as a space of encounter between different perspectives, where lines of thought converge, interact and subsequently diverge. Three of the "lines" I intend to consider are constituted by Bakhtin's theory of consciousness, theory of language and theory of the novel. It is by thinking through these interconnecting theories that I delineate an alternative approach to Kristeva's dichotomic emphasis.

Bakhtin's philosophical premises concerning the self-other dialogic relation are rooted in questions of perception which especially preoccupied him in the early stages of his career. In a text written around 1923 he wrote: "I cannot perceive myself in my external aspect […]. In this sense, one can speak of the absolute aesthetic need of man for the other [who] alone can bring into being the externally finished personality" (qtd. in Todorov 95; 1:33-34). Contrary to Kristeva's account, the emphasis is not on division of selfhood but rather on a fundamental insufficiency of selfhood. What ensues is not a fragmentation of identity but a search for the other in order to reach self-completion. Furthermore, the primacy of perception is inextricably linked to questions of perspective. The other's contribution consists in confronting the self with an opposing perspective that proves necessary to reach a certain degree of totality. Finally, it should be noted that Bakhtin's phenomenological remarks are already imbued with an existential tonality. The use of the oxymoron "external[]… personality" suggests a strategic move from the interior to the exterior, from the psychological to the social, from the "center" of identity to its borders. Bakhtin's privileging of inter-subjectivity over subjectivity leads him to explore not so much the depths of a personal unconscious but rather the in-between status of both language and subjectivity.

Bakhtin expounds upon his view of perception in a theory of consciousness based on the primacy of dialogue. Countering the Cartesian equation between being and thought (*cogito ergo sum*) Bakhtin holds that "[t]o be is to communicate" (qtd. in Todorov 96; 4:311). Building on the insights derived from his considerations on perception, he affirms that "[m]an has no sovereign territory; he is all and always on the boundary" (96; 4:311). The subject's "homelessness," unlike for the early Lukacs, is not a nostalgic notion but is rather perceived as the necessary condition to enter into a "zone of *dialogical contact*" ("Prehistory" 45) with another subject.[5] What ensues is a negotiation as well as a transgression of the boundaries of selfhood that undermine a dichotomic understanding of the self-other binary and promote its relational and synergetic dimension. In fact, Bakhtin affirms: "I must find myself in the other, finding the other in me" (qtd. in Todorov 96; 4:312). In a dialogic communication, selfhood bleeds into otherness and vice versa, which explains why the Bakhtinian subject "never coincides with itself" (24; 3:410). The interconnectedness and interdependence of self and other promoted by Bakhtin's theory of consciousness favor a relational dimension of binaries which should not be confused with their conflation. In fact he does not advocate a "fusion" of self and other but rather investigates the "tension" (108; 1:78) that ensues from this generative encounter. Thus, the oppositional quality of dialogue is not discarded but explored in its dynamic implications. The Bakhtinian consciousness is always engaged in a process of becoming that leads Bakhtin to posit an "unfinalizability of human consciousness" (*Bakhtin Reader* 14).

Kristeva's dichotomic understanding of Bakhtin's literary typology is not erroneous, only insufficient to account for the dynamic aspect which characterizes the dialogical relationship sustaining the Russian theorist's binary thought. Opposition, only constitutes one of the poles upon which dialogism is grounded and can therefore not be considered as "irréductible." Its necessary counterpart is the notion of union. The generative tension that comes of these two contrasting tendencies clearly appears in Bakhtin's theory of the utterance. Countering Saussure's synchronic and impersonal conception of the sign—which he defines as "abstract objectivism" (qtd. in Holquist, *Dialogism* 42)—Bakhtin elaborates a theory of language that takes into consideration the speaking subject with its socio-historical background. Even though

Bakhtin does not postulate a *spaltung* of the sign and refers to the concept of *slovo* [6] instead, he agrees with Saussure that the word has no meaning in itself. However, contrary to Saussure, he does not situate the word between a differential chain of signifiers, but rather between two subjects in a concrete (and therefore contextually dependent) dialogic relationship. Accordingly, Bakhtin writes that "the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language," and he adds that "language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's" ("Discourse" 293).

Both Bakhtin's theory of consciousness and language deal with borderland phenomena. Meaning, like subjectivity, is never identical to itself but is achieved through a process of negotiation developed by contradictory forces. On the one hand, the word, for Bakhtin, being "half somebody else" is imbued with the other's ideological "intentions" (294). The speaking subject's perspective on language is determined by social, historical, geographical and cultural factors: "Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life" (293). Expanding his early "aesthetic" consideration on the perceiving subject, Bakhtin imbues questions of perspective with social content. Opposing perspectives turn into opposing "world view[s]" ("Prehistory" 82). Therefore, in dialogue, the word is subjected to "centrifugal" forces that threaten to split it in two. On the other hand, the very possibility of dialogue is sustained by the existence of opposing ideological perspectives. Through ideological opposition a tension is generated that engages and unites two (or more) subjects in a process of conceptual and identity border negotiation. Paradoxically, the "centrifugal" forces at work in a dialogic relationship also engender a contrary "centripetal" movement. According to Bakhtin, "[e]very concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear" ("Discourse" 272). Therefore, the Bakhtinian word, by being "half someone else," is a contested and at the same time shared word. Language, for the Russian theorist, functions as a "membrane" (Bruhn and Lundquist 28) between self and other, and its function is to both divide and unite the self-other binary in a relationship of generative tension.

Bakhtin's considerations on consciousness and language inform his understanding of the dialogic process taking place within the novel. The self-other binary finds its counterpart in the author/narrator-character binary. Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, provides a passage to engage dialogism at the micro-level of narration. The following excerpt reveals Emma's disillusionment with her second love affair:

—Je l'aime pourtant ! se disait-elle.

N'importe ! elle n'était pas heureuse, ne l'avait jamais été. D'où venait donc cette insuffisance de la vie, cette pourriture instantanée des choses où elle s'appuyait ? (Flaubert 357; pt. 3, ch. 6).

The monologic beginning of these lines expressed by Emma's direct speech is instrumental to introduce the subsequent dialogical part of the passage. Flaubert's use of free indirect discourse renders Emma's thoughts in her idiom while preserving the third-person narration. Bakhtin defines this narrative device as "*hybrid construction*" ("Discourse" 304). The in-betweeness suggested by the choice of the term "hybrid" is cogent with his conception of dialogue encompassing two opposing points of views. On the one hand, Emma's emotional turmoil is the object of parodic stylization which introduces a distance between author and character's

perspectives. Her outburst of passion is immediately undermined by the subsequent "[n]'importe !" which suggests a certain shallowness of feelings and instability of character. Emma's subsequent meditation on the "insuffisance de la vie," is thus relativized. On the other, Flaubert's use of this hybrid construction—which is consistent throughout the novel—allows him to enter in a dialogic relation with Emma's language. To a certain degree, the "double-voiced" (326) nature of this passage makes it possible to hear behind Emma's language, the thoughts of the author.[7] Bakhtin defines the duplicity of voices within a single utterance "internal dialogization " (284).

What characterizes a dialogic relationship, both in life and in the novel, is its non-hierarchical dimension. With respect to the novel, Bakhtin states that "[f]or the author the hero is not 'he' and not 'I' but a fully valid 'thou' " (*Bakhtin Reader* 93). Flaubert's use of "internal dialogization" shifts Emma's status from an object of parodic discourse, to a "thou," "located in a zone of potential conversation with the author" ("Prehistory" 45). The engagement of a dialogic relation between author and character situates them "on the same plane" ("Epic" 27). At the micro-level of the utterance "insuffisance de la vie," two ideologies are put in a dialogic relationship. Considering what Bakhtin defines as "the binary tone of the word" ("Prehistory" 55), it can in fact be argued that the reference to life's insufficiency conceals two thoughts, two voices, two languages. It is an utterance imbued with heteroglossia. On the one hand this utterance clearly manifests Emma's dissatisfaction with her middle-class rural life and disillusionment with her short-lived love affairs. This "romantic" *pathos* is parodied by the author. On the other, the author, having no voice of its own, is subjected to Emma's "*character zone*," ("Discourse" 316)—i.e., the field of action of her linguistic consciousness—and speaks through her language. To put it with Bakhtin, Emma's language is "simultaneously represented and representing" ("Prehistory" 45). Behind her language and world view (what is represented), we hear the voice of the other/author expressing (representing) his outlook on life. Therefore, a single word embodies two conflicting ideologies which generate a "battle between points of view" ("Discourse" 315): the heroine's disillusionment with romance and the author's philosophical counterpart. In brief, the tension generated by heteroglossia which has been dialogized ("dialogized heteroglossia") allows us to hear the multiple behind the one.[8]

To a certain extent, we could postulate that the character's language enables the author to express his own meditation on life's insufficiency which is sustained by a different ideological perspective. The practice of writing, could then function as a means to transgress the limiting boundaries of gender, class, geography, history etc. imposed by life. Flaubert implicitly affirms the dialogic potential of writing which implies a blurring of the boundaries between self (author) and other (character) with the famous affirmation, "Madame Bovary, c'est moi!" (qtd. in Ajac 10). Through the process of writing he can engage in what Gilles Deleuze would call *un devenir femme* and what Bakhtin defines as a process of finding the self in the other (see above). However, the total conflation of difference into unity—which would bring the dialogic process to a standstill—is undermined by a contrary declaration concerning *Madame Bovary*: "[S]ujet, personnage, effet", Flaubert writes, "tout est hors de moi" (10). These two contradictory statements foster a critical engagement with Kristeva's tendential (because dichotomizing) language.

The transgression of the Aristotelian principle of non-contradiction does not compromise the logic of dialogism. In fact, as the case of hybrid constructions shows, identity, contrary to its etymological meaning (from Latin, *idem*, the same), does not exclude otherness but is grounded on it: the 'I' is constituted by a 'not-I.' Moreover, the coexistence of centripetal and centrifugal forces at the level of the utterance, according to Bakhtin, creates the necessary conditions for author and character to "combin[e] in the unity of an event but nonetheless without fusing" (qtd. in Todorv 104; 2:8). Difference is preserved in unity, so that Falubert, like a reader of fiction, can identify with the heroine while at the same time preserving his "exotopy" (108; 1:79) and individuality. It follows that Kristeva's definition of dialogism as "double appartenance du discours à un 'je' et à l'autre" characterized by a "*spaltung* du sujet que la psychoanalyse établira avec précaution scientifique"("Une poétique" 13) needs to be restated. Relying on the psychoanalytic model which considers the subject as an individual monad (Freud's ego), she also implicitly relies on the Aristotelian premise that "self" is not "non-self" (i.e. other). The "double appartenance" of Flaubert's discourse, however, does not entail a schizophrenic split of identity. On the contrary, it promotes a creative process that allows for the exploration of the boundaries of selfhood through a dialogic confrontation with otherness.

On a more general level, Kristeva states that "[l]e langage d'un certain roman est le terrain où ce morcellement du 'je'—son *polymorphisme*—s'entend" (12). Bakhtin, once again, does not push his considerations on the "multiplicity of voices" inherent in the polyphonic novel that far. In fact, as the multiplicity of voices and perspectives (the novel's "heteroglossia") finds a novelistic unity in a "style that fragments and orchestrates its own intentions" (Bakhtin, "Discourse" 381), the speaking consciousnesses in dialogue engage in a relation of "unity…without fusi[on]." The result is not a cacophonic fragmentation, but a symphonic orchestration. Therefore, Kristeva's partial understanding of dialogism prevents her from encompassing the contradictory dynamic inherent in its "double appartenance." She insists on the fragmentary and the partial: not division and union but division alone; not fragmentation and orchestration but fragmentation alone; not centrifugal and centripetal forces but centrifugal forces alone. In short, she fails consider the generative tensions inherent in the dialogic process because she bases her argument on her own epistemic grounds.

The epistemological foundations of Bakhtin's paradoxical notion of dialogue can be traced back to a logic developed at the origins of Western civilization. Inherent in Bakhtin's understanding of dialogism is a definition of binaries that deviates from the Aristotelian principle of non-contradiction. Bakhtin's precursor is implicitly suggested by Sergei Bocharov who wrote that he "is as 'dark' as Heraclitus" ("Event" 42). The analogy, however, can be pressed beyond the "obscure" character of the two philosophers' thought. The logic at work in dialogism is in fact epitomized in Heraclitus' eighth fragment where he affirms: "[W]hat opposes unites…the finest attunement stems from things bearing in opposite directions, and all things come about by strife" (*Fragments*15). Dialogism, according to my understanding of Bakhtin, is based on an opposition that unites. This principle is at work in different ways in his theory of perception, consciousness and language. It affirms the necessity of an opposition that does not generate division but unity in difference. Moreover, an opposing perspective, ideology, or identity, is necessary to engage in a mutual process of transformation. The "strife" that ensues from an opposition that unites without fusing is the source of generative tensions that allow one to negotiate the boundaries of both utterances and subjects. What Bakhtin calls the "unfinalizability of human consciousness"

(*The Bakhtin Reader* 14) illustrates the impossibility of synthesis inherent in dialogism which is a vision cogent with Heraclitus's philosophy of becoming.[9]

Michael McKeon, in his introduction to the part devoted to Bakhtin in *Theory of the Novel,* affirms that the latter "elaborates a historical theory of language [upon which his theory of the novel reposes] whose dialectical acuity depends very heavily on the riskiness of dichotomous formulation" (319). McKeon is right to point out the quasi- Manichean aspect of Bakhtin's thought, and as such he supports Kristeva's considerations on the incommensurable aspect of Bakhtin's literary typology. However, he goes beyond Kristeva by asking a stimulating question which reaches the heart of Bakhtin's dialogic method. "How are we to reconcile," McKeon asks, "this strikingly absolute characterization…with [Bakhtin's] admission that 'there never was a single strictly straightforward genre'?" (*Theory* 319). McKeon's dialectical view, like Kristeva's psychoanalytical one, has difficulties in coping with the paradoxical logic of dialogism. In order to understand Bakhtin's contradictions, his work must be considered holistically.

The oppositional dimension of Bakhtin's typology is most striking in the first essay of *The Dialogic Imagination* entitled "Epic and the Novel: Towards a Methodology for the Study of the Novel." The terminology Bakhtin uses to define both epic and novel can provide an answer to McKeon while at the same time relativizing his (and Kristeva's) dichotomic emphasis. The epic is defined as an "organic whole" (4) which is "immutable," "ossified," "walled off"(15), and is characterized by "conclusiveness" (16) and "hierachical distance" (18) with the present. The novel, on the other hand, is defined in terms of "openendedness," and "indeterminacy"(16). Moreover, it is involved in a "process of 'becoming' " (5) generated in a "zone of [dialogical] contact" (16) with the present which leads to "ever examining itself" (39). It should be noted that these characteristics can equally be applied to two opposing conceptions of subjectivity. Behind the epic we find a unitary, self-sufficient and static vision of identity, whereas the novel reposes on the same theoretical premises which inform Bakhtin's theory of consciousness and dialogue (see above). To put it briefly, novel and epic are grounded on different "literary-language consciousnesses" ("Discourse" 376). The epistemological "dilemma" Bakhtin confronts in developing a "methodology" to approach the novelistic genre concerns a choice between relying on dialogism or to refuse it. The novel, like the self, can be considered in isolation, or in a relationship of tension with its "other" which generates an opposition that unites. Bakhtin's choice is already specified in the title of the essay. Epic and novel can neither be considered independently nor as two dichotomic poles only, but need to be seen as two poles which are part of a dialogic relationship. Hence, the borders between epic and novel are as unstable as those between self and other.[10] It is precisely their synergetic interaction that allows Bakhtin to move "[t]owards a methodology for the study of the novel."

McKeon's dialectical lenses, like Kristeva's psychoanalytical background, leads him to stress the dichotomic aspect of Bakhtin. The concept of dialogism, however, while growing out of the Hegelian dialectics also provides a challenge to it. In fact, Bakhtin argues that the latter offers "the least favorable ground for the flowering of a multiplicity of unmerged consciousnesses" and that it "can only generate a philosophical monologue" (qtd. in Todorov 104; 2:41). Bakhtin's objections challenge the foundations of the dialectical process. His emphasis on growth signified by the image of "flowering" implies an opposition to the Hegelian emphasis on the hierarchical and violent nature of the process which the latter defines as a "Kampf auf Leben und Tod"

between a master and a slave ("Independence" 12). Moreover, by advocating multiplicity and non-fusion, Bakhtin rejects the teleological dimension of the three dialectical steps which dissolve difference into an "absolute consciousness," (hence its monologic dimension) halting the process of becoming through an epistemic closure (synthesis). It would therefore be misguided to consider Bakhtin's theory of the novel according to a dialectical development. Every theory, as far as possible, should be understood on its own terms first.

The dialogic dimension of Bakhtin's theory of the novel finds a continuation in his considerations on what he calls the "First" and "Second Stylistic Line." The first is characterized by the predominance of a "single language and a single style" ("Discourse" 375), whereas the second "incorporates heteroglossia *into* a novel's composition" (375). The tension between monoglossia and heteroglossia is not specific to the distinction epic/poetry and prose but is rather at work within the novel itself. In fact, Bakhtin specifies that in the novelistic genre, "[b]oth lines crisscross and are interwoven with each other in a number of different ways" (376). The clear cut opposition between novel and epic, heteroglossia and monoglossia, that pervades *The Dialogic Imagination*'s first essay, serves as a point of departure to subsequently move beyond dichotomic oppositions. By the time we reach the fourth essay, "Discourse in the Novel," opposites become part of a binary relationship at work within the novel itself.[11] Situated on the "unitary plane of the novel" (292), oppositional concepts bleed into one another. Following the principle of polarity, opposites become opposite only according to degree. Hence, Bakhtin can start to nuance his "Manichean" categories by affirming, for instance, that "monoglossia is always in essence relative" ("Prehistory" 66).

The polyphonic novel, in a similar way to the dialogized word and dialogic consciousness, assumes the status of a border phenomena. Defined as a "genre that is ever questing" and "ever examining itself" ("Epic" 39) the novel is generated by a constant negotiation of its boundaries: it "senses itself on the border" ("Prehistory" 67) between monoglossia and heteroglossia. Bakhtin's word for the negotiation of these boundaries is "novelization" ("Epic" 7); a word that implies a process rather than a state. As dialogue frees the subject from the boundaries of a self-contained and static sense of identity, "novelization" frees other genres by introducing into them "indeterminacy" and "openendedness" (7). The outcome is neither division nor fragmentation but rather the entering in a river of becoming where both subjects and novelistic genres constantly challenge their identity borders. "Sameness," in a world in flux, is constantly shot through by difference. The death of the unitary subject, therefore, is only the necessary condition for its dialogized birth, and the polyphonic novel functions as a powerful aesthetic medium to both describe and express dialogic possibilities which erode the boundaries between fiction and life; theory and experience.

NOTES

1. Some of the key texts on Bakhtin's theory of consciousness were still unpublished by the time Kristeva wrote this essay.
2. Tzvetan Todorov's commented anthology *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogic Principle* assembles a large variety of Bakhtin's writings and will be instrumental in considering different aspects of

his thought. Citations of Bakhtin from this anthology are indicated as follows: The first of the two numbers in the parentheses following the page reference in Todorov is to the number of Bakhtin's works listed under Todorov's anthology in the bibliography. The second number refers to the page in Bakhtin's book.

3. The parallel is partially justified since the two thinkers share some fundamental epistemological premises. Nietzsche's perspectivism matches Bakhtin's multiplicity of voices; the Dionysian has its counterpart in Bakhtin's carnivalesque**.** Moreover, both authors, in different ways, stress the centrality of the body and of language in the formation of subjectivity. Finally, both their philosophies are a celebration of life and advocate the necessity of a direct contact with it.

4. Term coined by Michael Holquist which I use interchangeably with "dialogue."

5. In the context of a theory of the novel, Bakhtin reconceptualizes Lukacs's devolutionary notion of "transcendental homelessness" (qtd. in McKeon 189) in terms of what is gained in the novelistic world, namely a proximity with life. The fact that I can apply these novelistic concepts to Bakhtin's theory of consciousness, already indicates the fundamental continuity existing between different layers of his thought.

6. Both Todorov and Kristeva point out the ambiguity inherent in the term*slovo* since it refers both to "word" and "discourse."

7. Bakhtin speaks of a "refracting of the author's intentions" by the narrator's story. Accordingly, he seems to endorse an intentionality of the author as he affirms that "[i]f one fails to sense […] the intentions and actions of the author himself, then one fails to understand the work" ("Discourse" 314). It is in this sense, that I make use of the notion of "author" instead of narrator, while being conscious of the postmodern dismantling of this concept.

8. The emphasis on hearing is central for Bakhtin and is mirrored in his penchant for concepts derived from musical terminology; the most obvious examples being the term "polyphonic novel" and "orchestration."

9. Heraclitus' s famous affirmation, "it is not possible to step twice into the same river" epitomizes his vision of life as constantly in flux (*Fragments* 55).

10. Indeed, the same considerations apply to the binary "novel-poetry." The fact that Bakhtin often uses poetic works to illustrate the functioning of dialogized heteroglossia (see "Prehistory" 43-45) already blurs the frontiers between genres rather than "walling them off."

11. It should be noted that the essays constituting *The Dialogic Imagination* are not arranged in chronological order but, as its editor puts it , have "been arranged in order of their complexity" from the "simplest" to the "most difficult" (Holquist, "Introduction" xxxiii). Implicit in the progression is a movement from dichotomic to dialogic thought.

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